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ABSTRACT

This paper summarily reviews cross-cultural studies of the art work of lower class black children and middle class white children, research done on cognitive development patterns of inner city blacks, and theories of the way in which experiences with art can affect the cognitive domain of these children. Suggestions for appropriate subject matter and teaching techniques appear in this review. Research reported indicates that lower cognitive, perceptual, and drawing development were evident in the lower class inner city black child. It is believed that the implementation of the emphases and teaching methods of art curriculum suggested by research could permit common characteristics to emerge which could observe, describe, and measure the significant uniqueness of the black child's cognizance and portrayal of inner city life. (KG)

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ART AND THE URBAN CHILD

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ART AND THE URBAN CHILD

Schools of the inner city continue to be sites of confrontation between Blacks and whites. The issues often are derived from a lack of consideration of the particular qualities and needs of the low socio-economic class Negro living in the inner city. Now the attention of educators and non-educators alike is demanded.

Art educators who have long emphasized the importance of the individual, are also reexamining curricular choices and instructional methodology. They are attempting to take a fresh look at the particular ways that art can contribute meaningfully to the Black inner city student. Through research and discussion, they are seeking a sound basis for making new decisions. In a discipline where the observable behavior is so difficult to objectively evaluate, we can consider the accumulated findings as evidence of a commendable and scholarly effort.

One source of observable behavior is the art product of the Black inner city child. The individual, casual observations of well-meaning art teachers in the past, leading to some concensus that art work of Black children differed in only superficial ways from that of other children, may be a result of expectations on the part of children and teachers. The "no difference" stand does not coincide with the opinion of numerous Black artists that there is a Black art which has a particular essence and qualities to which the Black can only relate. Is there such a peculiar essence? Is it gained through maturity alone . . . or could it emerge, with specific encouragement, in art produced by Black children in the inner city schools?

THE ROLE OF ART IN THE BLACK INNER CITY COMMUNITY

The child's perception of both the importance of art in his daily life and its relevance in his education occurs as a by-product of his sub-culture's value of art. In the Black inner city community, the image of the Black artist has been dimmed by several factors (as cited by symposium participants at the time of the N. Y. C. Metropolitan Exhibit "Harlem on My Mind"):

1. The Black artist is unknown in the Black community.

2. The visual arts--painting and sculpture--are rarely exhibited in the Black community.

3. Locations and facilities where young people or artists-in-residence could come and work in art have only rarely existed.

4. Many Black artists were working in the 20's and 30's, but most remained unrecognized because there was no "audience" for them in the white community. Nor did such an "audience" exist in the Black community even though some feel that every Black man has certain sensibilities and sensitivities--a total experience or an essence--that comes out and can be detected in art forms. Writer Frank Conroy[7] probably was speaking of this essence when he concluded that Black people have responded to misery by creating a fantasy as powerful as the pain of their experience.

5. Young black children are not exposed to art of museums. It is not a customary practice for young Black mothers to go to the art museums bringing their children along.

6. Scholarship in the Black world has gone into the social movement. Black writers are known, but critical scholarship is particularly lacking in relation to the visual arts.

7. Renewal of communication between Black artists within cities and between cities is needed. Several vital groups of this nature existed during the 1930's. Such communication could lead to organization in bringing art of Black artists to the schools, in establishing traveling exhibits of Black art, and in showing Black art at community museums.

8. Integration, though verbalized, is not a reality; being separate and making Black art may be the answer. However, the compelling need of some Black artists to produce an identifiable Black art to which Blacks relate to create positive self-identity is opposed by Black artists who feel that getting hung up in social conditions results in rhetoric.

Steps are being taken to better acquaint the Black inner city community with Black artists' participation in and particular contributions to the arts.

Mobile units tour Harlem bringing the arts to the doors of the residents. A mid-Harlem art museum features only Black and Puerto Rican artists.

WHO IS THE BLACK INNER CITY CHILD: FROM HIS ART?

Drawings of children of sub-cultural groups have often been examined in hopes of learning more about individuals or groups of children. On the nation-wide "Of Black America" television program, Bill Cosby reported on a study which concluded that Negro children's tree drawings--stunted and bare--differed from white children's tree drawings--bountiful and spreading. Negro children's faceless people result from the lack of a positive self-image. White children draw happy people. (Many art educators would concur with Harris (11) who warns against overinterpretation from drawings of children for personality analysis.)

In the Goodenough and Harris (11) cross-cultural studies using the Draw-A-Man test, few differences were noted between groups on the presence of features and details. Children of the mid-fifties are more successful in handling many body and limb details, but gave less attention to the mouth, nose, and chin than did children of the 1920's. Rather than positing psychological implications, Harris attributes these differences to change in the philosophy of art education which is now more accepting of body emphasis in drawing.

In these cross-cultural comparisons of children's drawings, Harris (11) found that the basic schematic representation of the human is much the same for all young children. Cultural experience, sex, and education do modify the basic schemata increasingly with age. Without proper controls for like experiences, attitudes, feelings, facilities, equipment, ability, and knowledge, it would be unwise to draw conclusions about differences in the art produced by Black inner city children as opposed to the art of some other group. Therefore, more careful studies of inner city children's art are needed.

In a study of the developmental drawing characteristics of culturally disadvantaged children, Eisner (9) found that an advantaged (middle income level) group of children achieved a higher degree of development than disadvantaged (low income level) children in all four (1, 3, 5, and 7th) grade levels studied. The drawing scores, which correlated with reading vocabulary scores at the fifth and seventh grade levels, showed greatest variance between advantaged and disadvantaged groups at grade one, gradually diminishing with increased age. The effectiveness of the criteria for the older child or a "catching up" or "slowing down" of the groups in attention to drawing could account for the greater similarity at grade seven.

WHO IS THE BLACK INNER CITY CHILD: FROM OTHER SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE?

Considerable research on the Negro sub-cultural group as a whole or the Black inner city child has been conducted by persons outside the field of art. Differences which do suggest the need for special curricular considerations have been found. For example, anthropologist, Edward T. Hall (10) has found that Afro-Americans have a particular capacity (culturally influenced) to relate to others in a deeply significant way. They, in turn, feel that their white counterparts have an absence of the capacity to humanize daily routine and find this impersonality repugnant.

Jensen (14) attributes the difficulty in teaching inner city children, (that good teachers with high motivations have had) to early educational experiences of the children. Many met repeated, inappropriate and unrewarding situations and inflexible requirements in earlier school situations. The differences of Negro inner city children are both environmental and genetic, according to Jensen. Race has substantially contributed to the variance in numerous research studies. Jensen rejects assertions that intelligence potential is distributed the same in all racial groups. He feels that research seeking to identify

varying patterns of individual differences such as that conducted by Lesser, Fifer, and Clark (19) has merit.

The study by Lesser, Fifer and Clark found a wider difference between Negro middle and lower class groups on measures of ability than were evident between the same classes in three other ethnic groups. Children of each ethnic group--Chinese, Jewish, Negro, and Puerto Rican--demonstrated distinctly different patterns of ability. The lower class Negro scored lowest of any group in spatial ability, numerical ability and as low as lower class Puerto Rican children in reasoning ability.

Rennels (24) found a predominance of field-dependent orientation with his Negro inner city subjects. His sample differed from the subjects tested by Rouse (25) --white middle class children of approximately the same age--who were predominantly field independent. The Embedded Figures Test was used to assess the field orientation in both studies. Definite conclusions cannot be drawn from a comparison of the two studies. There does seem to be some connection however between cognitive and perceptual modes of behaving and graphic expression in art forms.

The Lesser, Fifer, and Clark study suggests similarity to a recent study in inductive and deductive reasoning by Renick (23) and the study of spatial ability by Rennels (24). Renick found Negro children to be behind white children of the same social class in deductive and inductive reasoning at each of the (third, fourth, or fifth) grade levels at which the study was conducted. Rennels found that his sixth grade Negro inner city students responded differently according to sex in half the tasks and more favorably over all to inductive teaching than a deductive approach. This finding would seem to concur with the direction of the fourth to fifth grade loss in deductive ability of the Renick Negro students.

One art educator who has long been sensitive to the role of arts in different cultures and sub-cultures is June King McFee (20). In her 1965 report the kinds of interests, experiences, and values to which economically and socially disadvantaged children respond were summarized.

1. Most students spend their leisure time passively talking or watching TV or movies.

2. Few gave any indication that they were aware of why they were in school.

3. Pertaining to values, 60% checked "Be happy," "Work hard," "Use your head," "Help others." Approximately half checked "Do what the family wants," "Work when it is quiet," "Use your feelings" and "Enjoy life." Least valued was "Working when it is noisy" (which is understandable considering the difficulties presented by compact living conditions).

4. Few saw art as related to beauty or design; rather, the production of pictures was viewed as "fun."

5. Common responses to what is beautiful were unqualified, non-described categories of nature.

Finally, a study by Alper and Blane suggested that varying child-rearing practices influence the child's response to art media. Art processes and materials that lower socio-economic level children may not question, middle class children often reject as "dirty."

THE PLACE OF ART IN THE CURRICULUM OF THE BLACK INNER CITY CHILD

According to Woodruff (30), a preliminary rule which teachers should follow in formulating objectives is that they should only expect a student to learn or produce something which he wants to learn or produce. The values, experiences and attitudes which mold the wants of people in the inner city schools are important considerations in justifying the place of art in the curriculum. Various movements such as the Harlem Cultural Council, spirited voices for community-run schools, and leaders of revitalized inner city art museums such as the Dusable Museum of Afro-American Art and History (Chicago) and the Harlem Museum (New York City) speak clearly. Black persons in inner city who are

attuned to art want to bring about an awareness of art as a part of the Black culture of the inner city. Art education is being carried on in connection with these various out-of-school endeavors. Their success in even a limited way can contribute significantly to creating the "want" which makes the "should include art" in the public schools a moot point. Only time will tell if emphasis on the purpose of art, if any, will be effected in the inner city schools.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF PARTICULAR EMPHASES IN ART TO THE EDUCATION OF THE BLACK INNER CITY CHILD

Certain researchable suggestions can be made pertaining to the contribution of aspects of art training in schools to the education of the Black inner city child. From numerous studies on sensory discriminatory abilities, Cynthia Deutsch (8) hypothesizes that "an early noisy background impedes the proper development of auditory discrimination." It seems equally as logical that the complex visual stimuli could have a similar affect on the child. Visual awareness (not visual ability), to present knowledge, has no correlation with genetics, or cultures. However, the child in the inner city may "turn off" visual stimuli that would be relevant to learning in the formal education system or that could aid in organizing visual information, and subsequently, concepts. The shutting off of stimuli may be protective in order to have the rest or quiet to work that the McFee (20) subjects valued.

Art education could call the attention of the children to the visual values of their environment--the varying characteristics of lines, textures, colors, shapes, rhythms, relationships, spaces, and the ways they are or could be organized. The environment of the inner city is not void of subtle variations in color, of objects which make imprints, or children who have thoughts to put into form.

Before idealistic generalizing becomes a temptation, it must be recalled that Witkin (29) found differences in orientation to space and in ability to organize in a complex visual field between boys and girls. This suggests that children will likely respond to their visual awareness education to different degrees even though they do feel the worth of using their experiences and visual observations. Still, given an understanding of how to analyze the components of the complex visual environment of the inner city; given practice in the process of selection and rejection of elements; and given the encouragement to synthesize--to use the facility gained through art to organize and present an idea visually--one could expect more, exciting, and unique aesthetic creations in visual art products from the inner city.

The study conducted by Doris Barclay (3) also demonstrated that the disadvantaged children could increase their visual awareness and the ability to order visual stimuli into aesthetic productions. Such an increase in organization of visual stimuli should not be too surprising. Although it is not known that the subjects in the Barclay study had strong identification with any sub-cultural or cultural art forms, it can hardly be overlooked that much African art beautifully demonstrates a dramatic organization of lines and forms. It is conceivable that enforced leisure time due to technological changes could present the opportunity for training to increase visual organizational abilities and result in increased activities of artistic expression and enhancement in the inner city. Given the perceptual and organizing aides, equipment and supplies, groups with positive aims could operate.

The perceptual and reasoning abilities of Black and white children were studied by Renick (23). The conclusion of her study reviewed the response of each sub-group of her study to the various measures. She then made recommendations for emphases which would be remedial, or at least, serve to balance the tendency to reason in one extreme or the other. For example, where

deductive reasoning for grade three Negro children was found to be below the mean, Renick suggested activities involving a mystery where clues for a solution were sought, such as speculation (after some clay experience) as to how a ceramic horse was made.

Silverman (27) found that art experiences contributed to a significant improvement on disadvantaged seventh grader's ability to make rapid visual discriminations with more improvement being made by lower socio-economic students. Spatial orientation and vocabulary were improved by the experimental art experience where teachers had 1) information about the disadvantaged and the structure of art, and 2) a variety of teaching media, a special textbook, two and three dimensional reproductions, and other teaching aids. Other benefits, such as mature reaction to stress, and more favorable attitudes of boys to rules, were effected by various interactions of the variables.

The more successful inductive or analytic instructional method of teaching perspective found by Rennels (24) with sixth grade Negro children was structured as a self-reaction learning situation. Attention was drawn to principles through on-the-spot demonstrations and photographs taken by students of the scene. Size relationships were presented by using moving objects and strategically placed people. Drawing was done directly from the environment, and the use of cameras likely contributed to an immediate, direct and meaningful experience. Special perceptual training then seems to need relevance and immediacy for these students to learn most effectively.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHER OF ART IN THE INNER CITY

Faced with the broad range of individual differences, kinds of experience, and particular abilities of children in an inner city classroom, the teacher has an additional challenge. Children reflect the rapidly changing attitudes of their community and are apt to be particularly sensitive. The teacher

structures the art learning sequence - questions, situations, and introduction of concepts so that the child is motivated by the kinds of experiences and successes he has had. To be sure, the teacher cannot do this without being very familiar with aspects of the experiences of her students, creating a classroom atmosphere in which the students are psychologically secure, and then accepting the visual statements which derive from their values and experiences as valid. It is the same in any teaching situation. Preconceived ideas of end outcomes or interpretations the child should make to the teacher's questions do not fit into a classroom atmosphere which pretends to value divergent thinking, individuality and creative production.

Since Hall (10) found that the Negro succeeds at work which he feels really matters, Negro students should respond to art learning situations which allow them to communicate about what really matters or which provides skills and techniques for which they see a use in their daily lives. A teacher who listens can learn what really matters to his/her students. Hubbard (13) considered what would be meaningful to inner city students in the high school curriculum plan he organized for that type of situation. Such non-traditional art projects as creating order among or enhancing common home objects have value. They consider the experience of the inner city student, value aspects of the existing environment, and recognize possibilities that exist within the student's environment.

McFee (20) suggests helping students learn about art by beginning with what is familiar to them and using art to communicate about themselves, their clothing, homes, and environment, pointing out the visual elements and principles which operate around them. This analyzing approach leads naturally to the possibility of creating a new synthesis or order by manipulating the available forms. A feeling of the worthiness of each individual's personal view of

reality is vital and basic to having the tools, skills, and materials to carry out an idea.

Presenting the art lesson in terminology that is not distractingly different from what is understood by the student group is important. One can ensure for more communication between teacher and pupils by having students give instructions back to the teacher in any of various ways. Also, not only is it meaningful for the teacher to recognize successes, but also to show recognition of attempts at success. The honesty of the teacher is apparent to the students and has positive effects on their attitudes. Again, a teacher who respects her students as humans entitled to their own set of experiences and values will maintain a sensitive knowledge about those current trends, historical and cultural influences, and common experiences that contribute to the student's identity.

Time in the art classroom is important for many reasons— to avoid unfairness, as an incubation period for cognitive associations to take place, and for creative responses to emerge. Kozol (17) maintains that haste, hurry, and fear on the part of teachers compels children to say they are lying and adds up to assumptions of prior guilt on the part of teachers. Mednick and Houston (21) found that highly creative persons were aversely effected by stereotyped associates. This supports the hypothesis that creative persons, whose frequency of responses was initially slower than less creative persons, would continue making responses (and the more unique ones) much longer than would the less creative group. It may be that the inner city child coming to school with less basic skills will need more time to develop these and synthesize ideas which are creative for him.

Jensen (14) suggests that learning situations which are structured using operant conditioning techniques will result in acquisition directly related to

the individual's learning ability. In addition, the student need not bring as many developed skills to the learning situation. The emphasis, translated to art learning situations, would indicate that an individual approach and careful structuring of a sequence of simple to more complex activities would be appropriate in inner city teaching. It suggests giving short instructions which can easily be followed and accomplished before proceding with subsequent steps. It becomes all important for the teacher to conduct a task analysis of objectives to consider the development of each concept and competancy needed for success in the carrier project underway.

Silverman (27) reported, from his study aimed at developing and evaluating art curricula designed for disadvantaged youth, that depth instruction was significantly related to developing aptitudes for spatial orientation and formulating concepts. Having a sound plan of what teachers intended to teach was important, but a teacher's relying too greatly on materials which have been prepared by others does not contribute to increases in spatial visualization.

The pilot study conducted with disadvantaged youth by Doris Barclay (3) led to many suggestions for art teaching which coincide with those already stated. In addition she suggested:

1. encouraging the development of a curious inquiring approach.
2. planning individual rather than group art activities to minimize distracting competitiveness.
3. having male teachers.
4. giving concrete rewards for work well done, at least initially, due to an apparent distrust of verbal praise.
5. planning art activities in depth to obtain increases in aesthetic quality and understanding.

In presenting the accomplishments of the Teacher Corps approach to the poverty school, Heussenstamm (12) suggests several that met with success.

1. The teacher participants in the program included a dominance of three dimensional and craft oriented projects in order to produce a concrete product.

2. Resource persons who could be viewed as being racially or ethnically similar were employed.

3. Tutorial programs and arts and crafts became part of after-school activities which involved the youth.

4. Publicity was given to evidence of concern with community problems and valuing of the community structure.

Summarily, Silverman (27) concluded that it is the training and experience of the teachers which effects the most immediate and specific performance improvements from his students.

IS THERE A BLACK INNER CITY CHILDREN'S ART?

Most existing research on the Black inner city child leads to suggestions about how the teacher should operate rather than furnishing descriptive evidence of similarities or variations in the children's graphic art behavior. Casual observation contributes that individuality and variation can be seen in groups of Black inner city children's art products as in any group. Black inner city children may or may not change the hue "flesh" to suit their idea. The subject matter of their art work is sometimes similar to and sometimes varies from that of other children. Examples of exciting use of color could reflect genetic or cultural influences; they could stem from availability of supplies and a fresh response to a range of choices which is unhampered by stereotyped ideas about color "combinations." At this time, evidence does not justify isolating and describing separately any category of child art as "Black inner city child art."

It may be inaccurate, however, to assume that unique, descriptive qualities of Black inner city children's art work would not become evident under conditions that encourage development of a strong self and cultural identity and capitalize

on particular abilities of Black inner city children. Research studies reported have found lower cognitive, perceptual, and drawing development in the type of child commonly found in the inner city school-- lower socio-economic class and Negro --and this in turn, suggests needed emphases and methods in art curricular development. The implementation of such emphases could possibly permit common characteristics to emerge in which one could observe, describe, and measure the significant difference in the Black child's cognizance and portrayal of the Black inner city experience.

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* The February 24, 1969, video taped discussion by three black and one white art educators was organized by the author and sponsored by the Northern Illinois University art department. The one inch videotape is available for instructional use from the Media Distribution Center, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois. Catalog number: 4E69, Preparation for Teaching Art in the Inner City, in three parts, 130 minutes.

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